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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3928
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RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 9608
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 3054
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3713
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 2947
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 1005
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 3678
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0546
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1010
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 7589
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 5037
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 9957
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 4103
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 6040
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 8280
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMSOEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 003145

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XOXO
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: OPRC KMDR IS

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

All media reported that PM Ehud Olmert announced that he has a cancerous growth on his prostate. Olmert, who said his condition will not distract him from his work, will undergo surgery shortly

after the Annapolis meeting. Ha'aretz said that Olmert's doctors presented "too pink a picture." Media reported that among others, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Palestinian PM Salam Fayyad

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called Olmert to wish him well. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe noted that the White House and the State Department said that Olmert's condition should not interfere with the Annapolis meeting.

Major media reported that on Monday Attorney General Menachem Mazuz prohibited the state from cutting off electricity to parts of the Gaza Strip, as Defense Minister Ehud Barak threatened to do. Israel Radio reported that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Human Rights Watch criticized Israel's intention to cut off power in Gaza.

Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post quoted Shin Bet head Avraham Diskin as saying on Monday that he does not expect a wave of terror reminiscent of the second Intifada following Annapolis meeting, even if it is deemed a failure. Speaking at the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Diskin said that the "high expectation and possible failure of the summit could definitely spark high motivation for terror attacks [among Palestinian militants], but not with the intensity of the terror wave of October 2000." The Palestinian people were exhausted and lacked leadership, he was quoted as saying. Yediot quoted Diskin as saying that terrorists plan to abduct Israelis from the Sinai and take them to Gaza.

All media reported that an IDF reservist paratrooper was killed in the Gaza Strip and three other soldiers were wounded in the territories.

Ha'aretz quoted US Consul-General in Jerusalem Jacob Walles as saying that American firms selected by the US administration will advise the PA on the organization, training, and equipment of its security forces. Walles added that American security assistance will be carried out in consultation with the US security coordinator in the territories, Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton. Walles was quoted as saying that the US sees considerable improvement in the performance of the Palestinian security forces.

Ha'aretz quoted AP as saying that on Monday Iranian FM Manouchehr Mottaki met with Palestinian officials, including some from Hamas and Islamic Jihad. A headline in The Jerusalem Post reads: "Syria's Answer to Annapolis: A Conference of Rejections." The Jerusalem Post reported that the PA has dispatched three senior officials to Damascus in an attempt to persuade Syria not to host a conference called for by Hamas and other radical Palestinian factions.

The Jerusalem Post printed an AP wire report quoting Syrian FM Walid Muallem as saying that IAEA head Mohamed ElBaradei's criticism of Israel and the US over the alleged IAF shrike on Syria was proof of the "lies" leveled against Damascus.

Yediot quoted Khaled Ghazal, the Palestinian ambassador to Poland, who last week visited the former Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp complex along with his Israeli counterpart, David Peleg, as saying that he has read many books on the Holocaust and has seen the movie The Pianist three times, but that only when one visits Auschwitz does one understand the scope of the Holocaust.

Ha'aretz reported that Pfizer, the world's largest non-generic drug maker, is in advanced talks to establish an R&D center in Israel. The daily quoted GOI sources as saying that it will probably erect its center in the central Galilee.

Mideast:

Summary:

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Olmert must go to Annapolis as Mr. Peace, but play Mr. Security when he gets there. Annapolis is

good, but not at any price."

Ha'aretz editorialized: "[Complete disengagement from Gaza] must be done in an orderly and responsible manner, with the support of Europe and the United States."

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in Ha'aretz: "There is no benefit or logic in the attack launched against Egypt by intelligence officials in Israel, to the point of comparing it to a state that supports terror. But someone is apparently itching to get to the Aswan Dam."

Block Quotes:

II. "Not at Any Price"

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (10/30): "From here, Annapolis looks like a Fata Morgana on a sizzling day in the Sahara Desert.... This project is the private initiative of U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. After the failure of the American offensive in Iraq, she wants to give George Bush a farewell gift, a little something from our neighborhood. Bush's involvement will not resemble the very deep involvement of presidents Carter and Clinton at Camp David. This meeting is going to be a quickie. An international brief encounter, not an international conference.... There is an essential difference between Rice's involvement and Bush's. Rice can be tough with Israel, but only the President can twist Israel's arm. Bush, who is about to end his presidency without bombing any nuclear reactors in Iran or pulling American troops out of Iraq, wants Olmert to be prime minister of a secure Israel. Rice has instructions from Bush not to pressure Olmert into doing anything he thinks will endanger Israel's security.... There will be no international summit or encounter without a draft that sums up the core issues in the conflict in a manner acceptable to both sides. Israel agrees to these rules. The trouble is that, in practice, any agreement that Olmert and Mahmoud Abbas sign at Annapolis will obligate only half of Palestine. Abbas will be stronger in the eyes of the world, but not in the eyes of most of his people. The Israeli public does not have the strength, emotional or otherwise, for another dummy compromise with the Palestinians.... The Olmert administration is taking a risk by agreeing to make concessions on core issues in the conflict with the Palestinian Authority. An agreement to which only half the Palestinian people are committed will not be worth the paper it is written on. Olmert must go to Annapolis as Mr. Peace, but play Mr. Security when he gets there. Annapolis is good, but not at any price."

II. "Acting out of Frustration in Gaza"

Ha'aretz editorialized (10/30): "It is easier for Israel to attack a reactor in Syria than hit nearby Beit Hanun [in the northern Gaza Strip], because it is difficult, if not outright impossible, to avoid civilian casualties there.... More than any defensive or deterrent effect, this policy is simply about revenge. It is understandable, in view of the continued attacks, but it cannot be accepted as a policy that was conceived in a rational manner by the Defense Ministry. The role of the defense establishment is to defend the country, not to avenge on its behalf, and not to dampen the frustration of the residents of Sderot by announcing operations stinking of spin. Moreover, the power that these civilians supposedly have to influence the Hamas government and make it stop the rocket fire against Israel is minimal.... If the aim is indeed complete disengagement, it is impossible to accomplish this only by disengaging from Gaza, nor can this be seen as part of an opportunistic maneuver, or as punishment. It must be done in an orderly and responsible manner, with the support of Europe and the United States. The Gaza Strip is not independent, and will remain so for the foreseeable future. The babies of Gaza depend on the government of Israel more than the Hamas government, and the decision to punish them for the Qassam rockets does not contribute to the safety of the residents of Sderot."

III. "War against Egypt in the Winter"

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in Ha'aretz (10/28): "In briefings with Israeli journalists, intelligence officials claim that Egypt wants to see 'Israel bleeding'.... Israel is furious that Egypt allowed about 80 Hamas explosive experts -- allegedly trained in Iran -- to enter the Gaza Strip. As if the Qassam rockets had been waiting for them to arrive. In fact, Egypt represents an excellent culprit because it can also be punished -- by freezing U.S. economic assistance, for instance.... Despite the Israeli claim, Egypt is conducting a vigorous struggle against terror. Its efforts are primarily directed against those suspected of smuggling weapons.... The problem is that Egypt sometimes operates like Israel. Lacking sound intelligence, it detains hundreds and even thousands of people in the area, demolishes homes and conducts interrogations using methods that are anything but gentle. This generates enormous anger among the Bedouin population.... Could Egypt do more to stop the smuggling? The answer is yes, apparently it could -- that is, if it receives Israel's okay to deploy more forces.... Egypt is Israel's ally -- not only in matters involving oil, gas and trade, but also in the fight against terrorism. It is Israel's only ally that maintains a dialogue with both Hamas and Fatah -- and this is good. There is no benefit or logic in the attack launched against Egypt by intelligence officials in Israel, to the point of comparing it to a state that supports terror. But someone is apparently itching to get to the Aswan Dam."

JONES